ISSN 0316-8786
ISBN 0-88881-209-4

An Evaluation of School-Based Support Groups for Children of Divorced or Separated Parents

October 1990

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91-02356/

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Executive Summary

In the 1989/90 school year, P.O.I.N.T. (Parents and Organizations in North Toronto) and Social Work Services, Toronto Board of Education, conducted six peer-support groups for elementary school children (grades 5-8) in North Toronto whose parents were divorced or separated. The topics that were covered in the ten weekly, one hour sessions were: parental fighting, information provided to children by parents prior to divorce or separation, custody, visitation, parental dating, stepparents and remarriage.

Three of the six support groups were evaluated in order to determine their effectiveness in helping children cope with divorce and separation. The support groups were evaluated by parents, teachers, and children participating in the groups, using an existing questionnaire as well as questionnaires developed specifically for this evaluation.

Many goals of developmental facilitation groups for children of separation/divorce were realized. These include:

(1) to normalize the sense and experience of being a child of divorce.

The fact that there were 8-10 children in each support group who were all experiencing separation or divorce helped children to realize that they were not the only ones dealing with family change. (82% of the children indicated that the group helped them to realize that other children have the same thoughts and feelings as they do.) In addition, group leaders tried to encourage children to talk about problems that they shared with each other.

(2) to clarify divorce-related concerns and questions that can be upsetting and confusing.

96% of the children in the three groups indicated that their questions about divorce or separation were answered and most children reported that it was helpful to talk about divorce-related issues.

(3) to provide a safe place for children to experience and rework emotionally painful aspects of parental divorce and post-divorce life.

Children were able to discuss painful issues in a school setting surrounded by their schoolmates. All of the children indicated that they felt comfortable discussing divorce or separation with the support group members.

(4) to communicate to parents the nature of the concerns, conflicts and questions children of this age may have when their parents are divorced.

Children's concerns, conflicts and questions were communicated to their parents in the parent meetings.

(5) to help youngsters share and develop coping skills for particularly troubling thoughts and feelings and family interactions.

More than half of the children said that they had learned new ways of dealing with upsetting situations having to do with separation or divorce (68%).

While children's measured anxiety did not decrease, their responses did indicate that the groups were helpful to them in dealing with divorce and separation issues. Parents also reported positive changes in their children's home behaviour (for example, in their ability to concentrate, to sleep, etc.); but teachers did not observe significant classroom behaviour changes for these children.

The school-based peer support groups conducted by P.O.I.N.T. and the Board helped children to realize that they are not alone and that other children are also experiencing divorce/separation; provided the opportunity for children to have their divorce/separation-related questions answered; and helped children to learn new ways of dealing with their parents' divorce or separation. The groups' ability to alleviate children's divorce-related anxiety or alter their classroom/school behaviour is as yet undemonstrated.

SCHOOL-BASED DIVORCE/SEPARATION SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN

For many children, the effects of divorce are long term, and influence the course of their emotional, academic, and social development. According to Kalter (1987) "growing up divorced has become an alternative developmental path for a substantial number of children.... It appears that the long-term legacy of parental divorce includes both emotional pain and developmental disruption for many youngsters". (p. 587)

In response to their parents' divorce, children may suddenly appear withdrawn, depressed, or may display 'acting out' behaviour. Children may have increased difficulty in achieving certain developmental milestones such as learning to control aggressive impulses, achieving emotional separation from the primary caregiver, and the development of gender identity (Kalter, 1977). Several researchers have indicated that divorce has an effect on children's academic performance (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989, Kinard & Reinherz, 1986, Carlson, 1987).

Divorce also influences children's attitudes toward their families. Children whose parents are divorced may perceive their family as being 'different' or unusual. By extension, children may feel that they are different from other children. These children must be made aware of the fact that divorce is common and that there is no 'perfect' family.

Divorce affects a large number of children each year and can have serious consequences for these children. In fact, about 45% of children born between 1975 and 1977 will be members of separated or divorced families. It is therefore important for researchers and clinicians to focus on interventions for children from separated and divorced families.

Peer Support Groups

Peer support groups have commonly been used as a way to help children cope with the effects of divorce. This treatment modality has been popular because group leaders are able to help at least five children at one time and can provide the opportunity for children to share their divorce experiences with others their own age.

The goals of peer support groups for children whose parents are separated or divorced typically are: (1) to provide information to children on the divorce process and to clear up any misconceptions that they may have, (2) to help children express feelings and fears about divorce and to have them share experiences with other children, (3) to normalize the divorce experience for children and to make them aware of the fact that they are not alone, (4) to help

children develop problem solving skills to use when dealing with divorce related issues, and (5) to teach children to deal with their feelings in an appropriate way.

Groups may include anywhere from 5-10 children typically those in grades 4-8 and usually run one hour session per week for 6-8 sessions. Some treatment programs also provide groups for parents. Groups may include children whose parents have recently separated or divorced and/or children whose parents have been separated or divorced for a year or longer. An advantage of this mixture is that children whose parents are in the early stages of separation/divorce can learn from children with parents in later stages and come to realize that their peers have been able to cope with divorce. Since it is known that children's reaction to divorce is age-related, it is important to place children of the same age in one group so that they will be able to share their divorce experiences.

In terms of their content, groups usually focus on the different areas of the children's lives that have been affected by divorce and issues that they may be struggling with, such as: emotional expression, relationships with family members, parents' remarriage, and loss of one parent. Most groups touched on events that occur before and after divorce. This type of long term focus can provide children with the problem solving skills they will need to deal with events that may occur after the support group has ended.

Displacement techniques used with children to deal with issues related to divorce may include role playing, puppetry, and drawing. It is felt that through these displacement techniques, children will be able to express their feelings about divorce without having to expose themselves to the group emotionally.

In order for displacement activities to be effective, children must feel that they are not being singled out. The larger the group, the more comfortable children will feel. However, with a large number of children in a group, each child will have less time for discussion.

The majority of groups are conducted in a school setting. Children usually perceive school as a safe and familiar place and will therefore feel more comfortable discussing divorce-related problems. From a practical point of view, children, who are already at the school, can come to the group on their own and don't have to rely on their parents.

Evaluation of Peer Support Groups

Although there have been many different support groups conducted for school age children whose parents are separated or divorced, few evaluations of these groups have been carried out and only some of these have included control groups. These control groups consist of children from intact families, or children from separated or divorced families that receive delayed, different or no treatment. (Studies described below lacking control groups include Tedder, Scherman, & Wantz (1987), Ross (1989), and Freeman & Couchman (1985).)

Tedder, Scherman & Wantz conducted a support group with seventeen children in grades 4 and 5. The objectives and content of the group were similar to those mentioned previously. The Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (Walker, 1962) and The Child Behavior Rating Scale (Cassel, 1970) were completed by parents and teachers before and after the treatment. Results indicated that parents and teachers did not notice any changes in children's behaviour as a result of the group.

A support group conducted by Ross (1989) for children in primary, intermediate and middle school appeared to have positive effects as indicated by the comments of parents, teachers and children. For example, teachers mentioned that they now had information on divorce and its effects on children and they felt that they could better help students in that situation. The children who participated in the groups stated that: "It was good to make friends" and "It made me feel better to know that other people in the school had the same problems" (p. 74). There were no evaluative data other than these post-treatment comments.

An evaluation conducted by Freeman & Couchman (1985) indicated positive results for children. In this evaluation, 82 children between the ages of eight and twelve, living in Metropolitan Toronto, served as subjects. Parents and children participated in separate support groups. Interviews were conducted with children, parents and teachers prior to the intervention, after the intervention and six months later. The results of the interviews indicated that most parents felt that the group had helped them with their own difficulties surrounding their divorce and that the group had improved their relationship with their child. All children in the group thought that their participation had been helpful.

The following four studies evaluated the effects of the support group by including a control group: Kalter & Rubin (1989), Roseby & Deutch (1985), Bornstein, Bornstein & Walters (1988) and Loers & Prentice (1988).

Kalter and Rubin (1989) evaluated support groups for children whose parents were divorced and/or separated. Each group was conducted for an eight week period and involved two group leaders and five to ten children in grades 4 and 5. As part of the evaluation of the groups, parents completed the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) and children completed The Perceived Self-Competency Scales (Harter, 1982), The Locus of Control Scale for Children (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) and the Parent Perception Inventory (Hazzard, Christensen & Margolin, 1983). These measures were completed before the support groups began and after they had ended. The results indicated that boys in grades 4 and 5 were positively affected by the groups. Some problematic behaviours of these boys were reduced relative to control subjects and some of their attitudes toward divorce were altered. The results for girls however were more mixed.

Roseby & Deutch (1985) provided children in grades 4 and 5 with social role taking training to deal with their parents' divorce. A control group did not receive any training. Over a ten week period, children were encouraged to recognize their own feelings about divorce and to attempt to understand their parents' feelings. They were also encouraged to compare their parents' feelings to their own feelings. Children completed the Child Depression Scale (Reynolds, 1980) and Children's Attitude Toward Parental Separation (Berg & Kelly, 1979). These tests were completed by the experimental and control groups during the first and last group sessions. Teachers completed the Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale (Spivack & Swift, 1967) in the same weeks that the children in the experimental and control groups were pre-tested and post-tested. After the program, children in the experimental group compared to those in the control group, were less likely to blame their mothers, fathers, or themselves for the divorce, had less fear of being abandoned, and were less likely to long for their parents to reconcile. In addition, their knowledge and understanding of divorce improved. However, social role taking did not change disruptive behaviour in the classroom or alleviate depression.

Bornstein, Bornstein & Walters (1988) designed a psychotherapeutic treatment intervention for use with children of divorce. The participants were 15 children aged 7 to 14 whose parents had divorced during the previous twelve months and a control group containing sixteen children. The treatment was provided in six weekly sessions, each an hour and a half in length. Information collected from teachers indicated that only the children in the experimental group experienced substantial decreases in problem behaviours. In addition, client satisfaction questionnaires revealed that children and adults found the treatment program to be helpful.

Loers & Prentice (1988) evaluated a clinical treatment group for children whose parents had been divorced or separated for a period of three weeks to one year. The subjects were fourteen grade 2 students, six females and eight males. A control group consisted of seven grade 2 students. Subjects in the experimental group participated in a sixteen week interpersonal problem solving group and discussed divorce issues and situations. The control group only participated in the problem solving group. Children in the experimental group showed a decrease in somatic complaints (e.g., stomach aches, prior to visitation with the non-custodial parent) and verbal complaints as compared to the control group. Parents of children in the experimental group indicated that their children were more relaxed during visitation.

Overall, school-based, peer support groups have frequently been successful in clearing up misconceptions that children may have about divorce, in reducing problem behaviours and in improving relationships between parents and their children. However, due to the small number of systematic evaluations which have been conducted, it is a bit premature to conclude that school-based, peer support groups are effective in significantly reducing the negative effects of divorce on children's attitudes and behaviour. Further research will need to be conducted in this area. To this end, three of six school-based peer support groups for children from divorced or separated families which were conducted by the Toronto Board of Education and P.O.I.N.T. in the 1989/90 school term were evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

THE TORONTO STUDY

With the increase in the divorce rate over the last ten years, more and more children are becoming members of single-parent or reconstituted families. In fact, "divorce and separation are said to affect as many as 50% of children in Toronto schools at some point before their 18th birthday." (P.O.I.N.T. - Social Work Services Proposal, 1989, p. 1).

P.O.I.N.T. and Social Work Services, Toronto Board of Education, have been providing peer support groups for children in North Toronto elementary schools for a number of years. In the summer of 1989, P.O.I.N.T. and Social Work Services submitted a proposal to the office of the Director of Education concerning the provision of peer support groups for elementary school children in the 1989/90 fall and winter terms. Included in the proposal was a request for an evaluation of the program which would be carried out by Research Services. This report will describe the content and format of the groups, the methods used to evaluate the groups and the results of the evaluation.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to determine if the school-based peer support groups helped children cope with divorce or separation.

Subjects

One peer support group was conducted in each of six elementary schools in North Toronto with children in grades 5-8. The group leaders, (two Board Social Workers for each group) described the support groups to all grade 7 and 8 students in an alternative school, to all grade 6 and 7 students in one K-8 school, and to all the grade 5 and 6 students in the four K-6 schools. Interested students were given a parental consent form. (See Appendix A for consent form for groups.) In total there were 53 children in the six groups, 25 girls and 28 boys.

Treatment

Kalter's peer support group model entitled Time Limited Developmental Facilitation Groups for Children of Divorce (Kalter, 1985) was used with children in the six schools listed above. The focus of the model is helping children cope with divorce or separation by answering their questions about the divorce process

and helping them deal with feelings and life changes occurring as a result of the divorce. The model may be used with children whose parents have recently separated or divorced as well as children whose parents have been separated or divorced for a long time.

The issues which are addressed in Kalter's model are as follows: (1) pre-divorce parental fighting and arguing, (2) hearing from parents that they will be separating and getting divorced, (3) how custody is determined and how much input a child may have in that decision; (4) visiting with the non-custodial (or non-residential) parent; (5) parent dating; (6) the child's relationship with live-in partners and stepparents; and (7) remarriage and "blended" family life.

The model includes ten weekly sessions for children which are 60 minutes in length. Each session involves roughly the same components: warm-up and focus on a divorce/separation issue, a skit involving the issue to be discussed on a particular day, sharing of experiences, group feedback, leaders' comments on issue and information giving, discussion of problem-solving strategies, and closing. Skits are used in almost every session as an indirect means of learning about children's thoughts and feelings about divorce and separation. (For an example of a skit from one of the sessions see Appendix B.)

The first, second last and last sessions of the group model are different from the other sessions. The activities in the first session were designed to make children feel comfortable, to lay down the rules of the group and to learn about other children's experiences. After introductions and a discussion of the rules of the group, the next activity involves building a story based on information given by the group leaders. (See Appendix C for two examples of a group story.) The children are told that the story will be about a family with two children. The parents are 'heading' for divorce. The group leaders set the scene for the story and tell the children that "Mr. and Mrs. X were having an argument...." Each child in the group adds a sentence to the story. Afterwards, children are asked questions about how the children in the story felt and are asked to comment on the story.

During the penultimate session, a 'Divorce Newspaper' is developed by the children in the group. (See excerpts from divorce newspapers in Appendix D.) The purpose of the newspaper is to integrate the issues and ideas that have emerged in the sessions. Group members interview one another around divorce-related themes. During the last session the newspaper is read by the children. Group leaders summarize group discussions that touched on issues mentioned in the Divorce Newspapers.

Parent Meetings

As part of Kalter's model, two meetings are conducted for parents; one before the sessions for children begin, and one after the sessions have ended. These meetings are usually one hour in length. At the initial meeting, the purpose and activities of the group for children are discussed and parents may raise specific questions about their children. At the final meeting, group leaders tell parents about the issues which arose in the group, give suggestions on how to deal with children's questions and feelings, and get feedback on any changes that parents have noticed in their children as a result of the group.

Additions to Kalter's Model

Support group leaders made three additions to Kalter's model:

(1) Prior to the first session, individual interviews were conducted with each child. The purpose of these interviews was: (a) to learn about the children's divorce history and (b) to determine if there were any children with severe emotional difficulties who might seriously disrupt the group process.

(2) A second addition made to Kalter's model was a group session on joint custody. For further details on this session see Appendix E.

(3) Sessions for teachers were conducted to orient them to the special needs of children experiencing divorce. Teachers who are sensitive to the effects of divorce may then provide extra support for children during the divorce process. As well, a survey for teachers was developed by the Board on the topic of divorce and separation. The results of this survey indicated that almost 50% of teachers wanted more information on the effects of divorce on children and wanted to know how to help these children. One session was conducted with teachers in each of the six schools. The session consisted of a description of the divorce/separation groups, a movie which depicted a 'blended' family and the difficulties children experience in adjusting to this new family, and a question period.

EVALUATION

I. Subjects

Four of the six support groups were chosen for evaluation and complete data were obtained from three of the groups. The evaluation component deals exclusively with these three groups.

On the consent form for the support groups was a paragraph asking parents if their child could participate in the evaluation. (See Appendix F.) All parents who allowed their children to participate in the groups also agreed to the evaluation. As a result, there were twenty-eight children participating in the evaluation, eleven girls and seventeen boys. The children ranged in age from 10-14. One quarter (7) of the children were 10, 22% (6), 32% were eleven, 32% (9) were twelve, 14% (4) were 13 and 7% (2) were fourteen.

A control group was not included in the evaluation because there were not enough children to form such a group. Also, from an ethical standpoint, the control group must be provided with some form of treatment even if this treatment is delayed. Control subjects would have had to receive treatment after the experimental subjects so that their behaviour and anxiety level could be compared to that of treated subjects. Unfortunately, resources to provide treatment for control subjects could not be guaranteed because of the end of the school year.

II. Measures

Altogether information from six different sources of data was used for the analyses. They were: (1) The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Edwards, & Lushene, 1983), (2) The Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey, (3) the rate of attendance of children in the three support groups, (4) a revised version of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist for Parents, (5) The Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey for Parents, (6) a revised version of the Achenbach Teacher's Report Form, and (7) anecdotal information based on group leaders experiences with their groups. All data collection instruments were anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the topic being studied.

A. For Children:

(1) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (1983) was used to measure children's anxiety level before and after the support groups had ended. This has forty items describing how

children feel on a scale from one to five - e.g., "I feel calm." It was hypothesized that children's anxiety level would be reduced as a result of the groups. The Inventory was administered by the group leaders at the first and last group sessions.

(2) Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey

A brief survey was developed by the researcher and the advisory committee. This survey which was to be completed by the children at their final group session, contains 22 specific questions about issues covered in the group and children's level of satisfaction with the group. The Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey was pilot tested with children in one K-6 school. (See Appendix G for a copy of the Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey).

(3) Attendance

Children's rate of attendance was estimated by the group leaders for each group to gauge their level of commitment. In each of the three groups, children's attendance rate on average, was 90%. In fact, it was rare for a child to miss a session. Considering the fact that children's participation in the groups was entirely voluntary, their high attendance was indicative of their positive attitude toward the groups.

B. For Parents:

(1) Modified Child Behavior Checklist for Parents.

A modified version of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist for Parents (1988) was used to determine if there were any behavioral changes in the children as a result of the support groups. Some of the items on the Child Behavior Checklist dealt with topics that were not appropriate for the children participating in the support groups and these items were removed. Of the 113 items on the Child Behavior Checklist, 22 were eliminated by the researcher. (See Appendix H, Part II.) Examples of some of the items remaining on the Checklist are: "complains of loneliness" and "feels worthless or inferior". This instrument was administered to parents at the first parent meeting and at the meeting following the last group session for children. Questionnaires were mailed to parents who did not attend the meetings.

(2) Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey for Parents

An eleven item survey was designed by the researcher and the advisory group for parents. The purpose of the survey was to determine if parents thought that the groups had helped their children to cope with divorce or separation. There were also questions concerning parents' satisfaction with the parent meetings. (See Appendix I.) This survey was administered to parents at the second parent meeting. Parents who did not attend this meeting received the survey in the mail.

C. For Teachers:

Modified Teacher's Report Form

A modified version of the Achenbach Teacher's Report Form (1988) was used to determine if teachers noticed any behavioral changes in their students as a result of the groups. As was done with the parents' Child Behavior Checklist, ten items were eliminated because they seemed to be inappropriate for the children in the support groups. (See Appendix J.) An example of some of the remaining items are: "poor school work", "fails to carry out assigned tasks", "afraid of making mistakes", "dislikes school", "withdrawn", "doesn't get involved with others", and "feels too guilty". This instrument was completed by teachers in conjunction with the first group session for children and after the last session for children.

Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal information based on group leaders' observations was also collected (See examples in Appendix K).

III. Results

A. For Children:

(1) Children's Anxiety Level

There was no significant difference between the overall pre-test and post-test scores for the groups on anxiety as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory. (The statistic used was a t-test on group mean scores.) In other words, children's anxiety level was not reduced by the peer support groups. It should be noted that this is a measure of general anxiety, not specific to divorce and separation issues. It is possible that a more targeted measure would show more change.

(2) Children's Perceptions of Group Process and Level of Satisfaction with the Group

On the Divorce/Separation Support Group Survey, 22 or 78.5% of the children indicated that the groups were helpful to them in dealing with divorce and separation issues. As can be seen from Table 1, most of the children (86%) thought that discussing children's feelings about divorce and separation was helpful. Most children reported that the groups allowed them to share feelings and experiences, helped them to realize that they had the same problems as other children, and to learn new ways to solve problems and obtain information about divorce and separation.

There was no relationship between children's perception of the groups as helpful and the length of time since their parents' separation, suggesting that children whose parents had recently separated were no less satisfied with the groups than children whose parents had been separated for a longer period of time. There were no sex differences in children's perceptions of the groups as helpful.

TABLE 1

Children's responses to topics and issues discussed in support groups

(N = 28)

Topic for Discussion	Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know
Topics			
How children feel when their parents separate	24 (86%)	1 (3%)	3 (11%)
Parents' pre-divorce/ separation fights	19 (68%)	8 (29%)	1 (3%)
Visitation	19 (68%)	7 (25%)	2 (7%)
How parents tell their kids about separation or divorce	17 (61%)	9 (32%)	2 (7%)

Issues	Yes	No	Don't Know
Were children comfortable discussing divorce or separation with group?	28 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Were children's questions about divorce or separation answered?	27 (96%)	1 (4%)	-
Would the group be helpful to other students?	27 (96%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Did the group help children to realize that other children have the same thoughts and feelings as they do?	23 (82%)	4 (14%)	1 (4%)
Did the group help children to feel better about their parents' divorce or separation?	20 (71%)	5 (18%)	3 (11%)
Did children learn new ways of coping with divorce or separation?	19 (68%)	9 (32%)	-
Did children discuss the group with their parents?	13 (46%)	14 (54%)	-

B. For Parents:

(1) Parent-Reported Changes in Children's Behavior as a Result of the Groups

There was a sizable difference between the overall pre-test and post-test scores for the groups on the Child Behavior Checklist for Parents, indicating that parents were able to detect a difference in their children's behaviour after children attended the support group sessions ($t=2.46$ $p<.04$). Table 2 shows the five behaviours, out of a total of 91 listed (see Appendix H, Part II) which showed the greatest change from pre- to post-test. Children's ability to get their mind off certain thoughts showed the greatest difference. However these results must be viewed with caution because of the low return rate. Although 68% of parents completed the pre-test and 46% completed the post-test, only ten out of 28 parents (36%) completed both the pre-test and the post-test and one of the ten questionnaires was incomplete and could not be included. Most of the parents did not attend the parents' meetings. Questionnaires were mailed to parents who did not attend the meetings, but were rarely returned in spite of a follow-up phone call from the group leaders.

TABLE 2

Behavioural items which contributed most to the difference from pre- to post-test on the child behavior checklist, as reported by parents (n=9)

0 = not true; 1 = sometimes/somewhat true; 2 = often/very true

	Item	Pre-test	Post-test
1.	Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts	.78	.22
2.	Can't concentrate/ can't pay attention for long	.89	.44
3.	Poor school work	.56	.11
4.	Sleeps less than most children	.89	.44
5.	Sudden changes in mood or feelings	.78	.33

(2) Parents' Perceptions of the Groups for Children and their Satisfaction with the Parent Meetings

The Divorce Separation Support Group Survey for Parents was completed one time only, after the final session. Of the 18 or 68% parents who completed this Survey (in some cases surveys were completed by telephone and a few were completed and sent by mail), sixteen (89%) indicated that the support group had been helpful to their child. Reasons given for the helpfulness of the group were: (a) "children didn't feel that they were alone", (b) "children learned more about separation and divorce", (c) "children were able to discuss thoughts, feelings and experiences relating to separation and divorce", and (d) "children seemed to be more accepting of the divorce". Seventeen out of eighteen parents (94%) felt that the group would be helpful for other children.

More than half of the parents indicated that their children had spoken to them about the group (12 or 67%), suggesting that it had some sort of impact on them. When asked what their children had told them about the groups, parents said that children: "learned things from the group", "enjoyed being in the group", "liked the confidentiality of the groups", and "liked the skits". One parent said that his/her child had commented that there were disruptions in the group that prevented him/her from 'opening up'. Another parent said that her child was bored by the group because she had already come to terms with the divorce which had occurred in 1987.

Fifteen out of 18 (83%) parents said that the meetings for parents had been helpful. Parents said that the meetings were helpful because they: (a) were able to meet other parents and share ideas on handling divorce, (b) were informed about the content and format of the children's groups, and (c) learned that other parents have the same problems as they do. One parent said that too much time was spent completing questionnaires.

All eighteen parents said that the school should be involved in providing support groups for children whose parents have separated or divorced. One parent commented that: "Groups such as these, as well as drugs and sex should be a mandatory part of the school curriculum. Support groups are vital in helping children."

Even though most parents who responded to the survey (83%) indicated that the parent meetings had been helpful, some parents felt that they would have liked: (a) more feedback on their child's concerns, (b) more direction on helping their child deal with separation, (c) more discussion of their own concerns, (d) more time to spend with the other parents, and (e) more notice about meeting dates.

Five parents suggested there be a follow-up group for children after the initial group. For example, one parent said: "Please please continue with it (the program). I feel it should be an ongoing program to monitor and strengthen what you've started. There should be a follow-up group for high school".

C. For Teachers:

Behaviour Changes in Students as a Result of the Program

No significant changes in behaviour were found from overall pre-test to post-test on the Teacher's Report Form. However, the average score for 22% (23) of the one hundred and three items was zero, suggesting that no improvement was required for these behaviours. (See Appendix J, Part II, for list of items.) For the remaining 80 items, the differences from pre-test to post-test were insignificant.

As was true for parents, the response rate for teachers was low. Pre-test questionnaires were completed for 43% of the children and post-test questionnaires for 54%. However, pre and post tests were completed for only 32% of the children.

There was a change in children's behaviour from pre-test to post-test according to those nine parents who responded in full, but not according to teachers. This may be because parents would notice more changes in their children's behaviour than teachers. At school, children are not directly faced with problems associated with divorce or separation. At home however, children must interact with their custodial parent and possibly a stepparent and step-siblings. It is therefore most likely that any changes in behaviour would tend to occur and to be noticed at home.

D. Satisfaction with the Support Groups

Children:

Children's responses (as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2) indicated a high level of satisfaction with the group sessions, as did their very regular attendance.

Parents:

Parents seemed to feel that the groups for children and the parent meetings were helpful and that other children could benefit from the groups. Some parents commented that there should be a follow-up group for children when they reach high school: "As a trial project I feel very sure that children benefited from it (the

group) and that it should continue on a regular basis. As these children get older it would be good for them to be able to share their questions." Some children also commented that they would like to participate in a similar group in the next school year.

Based on comments from parents, it is clear that they would like more counselling around personal problems and problems in handling their children. This may be inevitable considering the emotional distress that parents may feel when going through a divorce or separation. When parents did seem to want more time to talk about their own problems, the group leaders were willing to see them during school hours or refer them to the social worker in their child's school.

IV. Limitations of the Study

(1) Because of the lack of a control group, it is difficult to know whether the behavioural changes noted by parents were solely the result of the support groups. Maturation or simply the passage of time between the pre-test and post-test could account for these changes, although it seems unlikely that any significant changes would occur without intervention in only ten weeks. Furthermore, children whose parents had been separated for more than a few years (22%) were just as likely to express satisfaction with the program as those whose parents had separated more recently. It is unlikely that the mere passage of ten weeks without any treatment would impact on students whose parents separated several years ago.

(2) There were difficulties in getting parents, who did not attend the parent meetings to complete a pre and a post-test Child Behavior Checklist for Parents. Often parents who attended the pre-group meetings were different from those attending the post-group meetings. Consequently there was a small number of parents who completed the pre-test and the post-test. Telephone interviews may be a better method to use in future evaluations.

(3) Teachers did not like to complete the Teacher's Report Form because they felt that it was too lengthy and was not consistent with the way that they evaluate their students. More involvement of teachers in the design of future evaluations would help to alleviate this problem.

(4) Because children volunteered to participate in the groups, they may have certain characteristics that make them different from children who did not volunteer (e.g. eagerness).

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this evaluation are mixed. The support groups did not alleviate children's anxiety. However, the measure used may not have been sensitive enough to measure divorce and separation-related anxiety.

Although the return rate for the pre-post Child Behaviour Checklist was low, parents who did respond indicated that children's behaviour had changed in a positive direction. Teachers, however, did not notice any changes in behaviour.

Based on the responses to client satisfaction questionnaires, children seemed to feel comfortable discussing their problems with the group. This comfort level was probably achieved because the children were in familiar surroundings with other children from their class or school. Because the children in each group were all from the same school, the opportunity exists for further discussion and sharing of experiences among group members even though the groups have ended.

Responses of parents to client satisfaction questionnaires indicated that they also benefited from the program. They were able to exchange ideas and share common problems with other parents and were given information about the impact of divorce on their children. Providing this sort of information to parents may help them to better understand and help their children cope with divorce and separation.

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Glenview Public School - Senior

401 Rosewell Avenue, Toronto, M4R 2B5 Telephone: (416) 393-9390

S. M. Koning, B.A.
Principal

I. R. Trant, B.A., M.A.
Vice-Principal

October 5, 1989

Dear Parents:

Mrs. Lynn Adirim, of the Student Services Support staff, will be conducting a discussion group for children living in single-parent or remarried households. Research has shown that important changes in family life are events with which children need to learn to cope in order to do as well as possible in school and socially. Even if a child has adjusted well to past family changes, he or she may still have questions or concerns about past or ongoing events.

The aims of this discussion group are to: 1) give children a chance to bring up any questions or concerns they may have, 2) let children know that growing up in a single-parent or remarried household is not unusual, 3) help children cope with any special feelings or worries they may have, and 4) correct some upsetting ideas children often have about divorce and remarriage. The groups are conducted at the school during school hours. Each meeting lasts 60 minutes and the group meets for 10 weeks. This type of program has run successfully at Glenview during the past two years.

Since there is a limited number of openings in the groups, we hope you will reserve a place for your child by signing the consent form below and returning it to the school office no later than October 14, 1989.

If you have any questions please contact Mrs. Adirim at 393-1850.

Yours sincerely,

S.M. Koning,
Principal.

SMK/HMS

I hereby give my consent for my son/daughter to join the discussion group for single-parent or remarried households.

NAME OF CHILD: _____ ~~FORM~~ _____

DATE: _____ SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN _____

APPENDIX B

Example of a Divorce Skit

The following skit is enacted by the group leaders as part of the session on pre-divorce fighting between parents. After the skit is performed by the group leaders, the children discuss the fights that their parents had before their divorce or separation.

Scene 1

Mr. X: (walking in from the hallway) I'm home!

Mrs. X: (stirring a pot on the stove) Don't tell me you're home. Where have you been? Dinner's ruined!

Mr. X: I told you I had to work late.

Mrs. X: That's the third time this week. I'm sick and tired of cooking for you and then having it get cold and then throwing it away.

Mr. X: Well if you didn't serve the same old junk night after night maybe I'd make more of an effort to get home.

Mrs. X: You think it's easy taking care of a house?

Mr. X: Plenty of wives do fine. Geez, you're just like your mother!

Mrs. X: My mother! What do you mean by that?

Scene 2

In Scene 2 parental anger escalates and an attempt is made to incorporate issues mentioned by the children.

Mrs. X: (accusingly) Do I smell alcohol on your breath? Were you at the bar? (If the group has brought up drinking as a reason for the conflict.)

Mr. X: (defensively) So I had a drink. If you weren't such a nag I wouldn't have to go drink.

Mrs. X: Were you alone? Don't think that I don't know what's going on with that new secretary. (If the children have raised the issue of infidelity.)

Mr. X: What are you talking about? Listen, I wonder what you do at home all day. It certainly isn't cleaning because the house is filthy. The kids are always running around wild. You can't even control them. (If the group has brought up childrearing issues.)

Mrs. X: You leave the kids out of this! It has nothing to do with them. It's just between you and me.

APPENDIX C

Divorce Story #1

Mr. and Mrs. Bell were in the kitchen fighting. Mrs. Bell says "My life around you is so horrible as you are drinking, smoking and being irresponsible". And so they started physically fighting. Then Joe and Billy came down and saw what was happening and they got scared. Mrs. Bell took a knife and threatened to kill herself if he didn't leave. The kids got so scared they ran to the police. The dad said "I'll move out".

The police took the kids and placed them in a foster home. The mother was hospitalized because she was so upset. After the mom got out of the hospital the husband told the mom he didn't want to pay child support.

Divorce Story #2

One evening Mr. and Mrs. Smith were having an argument. They were shouting at each other. Mr. Smith was so angry he was turning purple. Alice tried to be nice but he slammed his hand on the table. The children were feeling badly and wanted to protect their mother. They talked together about breaking up the fight but realized they were too scared to do that. They went upstairs, got into their pajamas and called their mother so that they could discuss their plan. Harry pretended to fall and hurt himself so as to get their father's attention. Mother said it's not your fault that we are fighting.

APPENDIX D

The Daily Divorce

OUR ROVING REPORTERS ASK:

What is the hardest thing for kids when their parents divorce?

- blaming themselves for the divorce
- not seeing their parents live together
- having to choose who to live with
- organizing their belongings, activities, etc. when parents have joint custody
- parents badmouthing each other makes the kids get stuck in the middle
- adjusting to different parenting styles and expectations is confusing
- wanting to spend time with one parent, but not getting along with their new partner
- parents holding up an unlikable partner as a model for kids
- getting along with step-brothers and sisters
- getting used to different rules with different houses

Are there any good things about divorce?

- the conflict between parents, the fighting and abuse stop
- kids no longer have to deal with a difficult parent
- kids get to know and relate to many more people in re-married and blended families
- kids get double goodies: two rooms, double vacations, more clothes
- sometimes parents give kids lots of things and attention to alleviate their guilt

What advice do you have for kids who are going through a divorce?

- it's not your fault
- you'll get used to it; it will be alright
- don't hope that your parents will get back together; accept that it won't happen
- stay out of your parents' fights; it's not your business; you can't fix it
- don't get caught up in taking sides

.../2

- don't try to make parents feel guilty

- don't try to act up to get attention

What advice do you have for parents who want to help their kids at the time of divorce?

- listen to your kids; let them express their feelings

- don't ignore your kids

- be available

- reassure them that it will be alright

- don't criticize the other parent in front of your kids

- fight in private

- don't pamper your kids; expect them to be O.K.

- don't put the burden on kids to be the capable one, to look after their parents, or to be "man" of the house

- don't dramatize

ADVICE COLUMN

Dear Dooby Deevorce,

My step-mother is always trying to get close to me. From right after the marriage she has been calling me stuff like "hun" and I don't really want to be that close to her right now.

Signed,

"Hun".

Dear Hun,

Your step-mother obviously wants to be close to you. Most kids find that it takes lots of time before they can feel affection for a step-parent. If things are moving too quickly for you, talk to you parents or step-parent about your feelings. Communicating will start things on the road to everyone feeling more comfortable.

Signed,

Dooby Deevorce.

THE DIVORCE TIMES

KIDS TALK ABOUT DIVORCE

Our roving reporters asked kids how they felt about divorce. They had feelings about their parents' divorce, both good and bad! They had advice for parents and for other kids whose parents are going through a divorce. Here is what they said.

Kids Understand...

Kids often understand why their parents split up. They said things like their parents "didn't like each other," "were incompatible," "grew apart" or were "not the same and don't get along."

Kids Talk About Good Things...

Some kids felt that when a divorce happens brothers and sisters get closer to each other. Sometimes kids were glad that their parents got divorced because it ended the tension in the home and the fighting.

And Not So Good...

It troubles kids when they don't see one parent as often as they'd like to. Some kids just think "there are no good things about divorce." They find it hard "having their parents apart." They often wish it didn't happen and it takes a long time to get used to. Some kids feel overburdened with adult responsibilities after their parents get divorced.

About New Relationships...

Kids find it hard when their parents start to date. Some kids find it hard to get along with step-parents and step-brothers and sisters, however, other kids are happy to have new step-siblings and half-brothers and sisters.

Relationships with step-parents can be good. It often works out well if the step-parent leaves the discipline to the parent and shows interest in how the step-child is getting along and talks to him or her about school and other interests.

Sometimes relationships change. Some kids fight more with one parent than before the divorce. Sometimes siblings fight more. Maybe this happens if one sibling is still uncomfortable about the divorce and hasn't talked enough about how he or she feels.

Advice To Others...

Parents should listen to their kids more. As one kid said: "please parents listen to your kids and don't make them feel scared to say what they feel." Parents should accept each other the way they are. When you get divorced you should make it calm with no (or hardly ever) fighting. And comfort the rest of the family. If you're getting divorced, you should sit down with your kids and discuss it with them but not put them on the spot.

Kids have advice for other kids going through a divorce. They would like to tell other kids that they have to live with the fact of the divorce. "Things will turn out for the good." If your parents are getting divorced, you should talk to someone about your feelings.

DEAR JOHN COLUMN

Dear John:

I don't like my step-father and don't get along with my mom. How can I tell her I don't want to live with her?

Signed,

Up in the Air.

Dear Up in the Air:

You will have to take the plunge and ask your mom for a time when the two of you can sit and talk. Maybe you can begin by telling her how you feel about your step-father and why. Then you might try to let your mother know that you are not happy with the relationship between the two of you.

I know that it's very difficult for kids to do this with their parents so it might be easier if you had a counsellor to help you to do it.

Signed,

John.

Dear John:

My dad has a new girlfriend and I don't like her. When he asks me if I like her, I don't say anything. What should I say?

Signed,

I Don't Know.

Dear I Don't Know:

Good for you, you've done the right thing by not saying anything. It's hard for kids to adjust to their parents' new relationships so maybe you need to let your father know that you need more time before you know how you feel about this new person.

APPENDIX E

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION GROUPS

Session # 7 - JOINT CUSTODY

RATIONALE

In one of the parents' meetings, all of the five families represented were in situations where the children lived in joint custody arrangements. This meant that they lived for a period of time with one parent and for an equal period of time with the other parent. This arrangement posed certain advantages and disadvantages for both parents and children.

The group leaders felt that including a session on joint custody would be a helpful addition to the Neil Kalter manual.

This session focuses on the joint custody issues presented for both parents and children.

This arrangement has certain advantages for both parents and children. Children can maintain close contact with both parents. Living together rather than having weekend visits establishes a more realistic relationship between parents and children and eliminates the "Disneyland-dad syndrome", often established by a visiting parent. Children develop adaptability when they learn to live in different households. They often have their own space in two houses. They have double access to goods, vacations and clothes.

There are some disadvantages to this arrangement. There is the upheaval of moving about from house to house. Sometimes articles are lost or forgotten. This can cause problems at school and inconvenience the children. The opportunity to make plans to be with friends in one neighbourhood may be curtailed when the kid has to go to the other parent's home. Sometimes children get the feeling that neither place is home. There are adjustments to make regarding different rules in each home, different parenting styles and different foods and activities.

Parents reported that younger children often need time to explore the house and take out all their toys when they arrive. They ignore their parents during this exploratory phase. Often children arrive squabbling with each other and there is a day or two of 'settling in'. Toward the end of the time, this kind of restlessness and quarrelsomeness re-emerges as the children and parent prepare to separate from each other. Adults find it hard to change from an adult-centered existence to a child-centered one. They also experience loneliness when the children leave.

AIMS OF THE SESSION

1. To allow feelings and thoughts about living in joint custody arrangements to be expressed. These include adjusting to different parenting styles and lifestyles.

2. To allow for the discussion of the benefits and problems associated with joint custody.

3. To normalize the feelings associated with the above.

4. To develop coping strategies for dealing with matters associated with joint custody.

ACTIVITIES

The topic of joint custody is introduced by the group leaders. "So far we have looked at a couple of ways that families continue after divorce. The children may live with one parent and have visitation with the other parent. The children may live with a parent who has re-married. Today we are going to look at the situation for children who are living part of the time with one parent and part of the time with the other. This is often referred to as joint custody." This preamble leads naturally to a review of children's current living situation.

The children are then told "we will be doing some skits about what it's like to live in a joint custody arrangement". There are two skits. The first involves the mother talking to a friend about joint custody. The second skit portrays the children coming for their week at their mother's.

SKIT I - Mother and friend are talking on the phone. Leaders play the roles and sit with their backs to each other across the room, as though talking on the phone.

Friend: Can you join me for a movie Saturday evening?

Mother: Not this weekend. It's my week to have the children.

Friend: How is it going? A friend was asking me the other day how joint custody was working out for you and Bob.

Mother: Each of us has the children for one week at a time. We are able to co-operate on some things. There are still some areas where we don't agree but the children seem to be able to adjust to different rules at different houses.

Friend: How is it going for your personally?

Mother: Well I have to go from an adult-centered life to being a parent again, but I soon adjust. When the children first come over I find all the action and noise a bit strange. It takes a few hours for us to adjust to each other again.

Friend: Would you be free next Friday evening?

Mother: No, the children are still here and I like to be home when they're here. How about Sunday evening? I' ll be finished the laundry then. We can order in. I would enjoy the

company. The house is so quiet after the children leave and I really miss them.

"How is this mom feeling about joint custody? What are some of the adjustments for her and the children?" (to the children in the group)

"What are some of the adjustments for children who live with both parents?" The leaders can list the ideas presented and a skit can evolve.

Child I: (Comes in and slams the door)
I sure wish I didn't have to be here.

Mother: What's the matter? You're usually happy to be here. You always enjoy playing with your train set.

Child I: Well I had to miss a sleepover at Jim's house. He lives near dad's.

Mother: That's too bad. Another time discuss it with me ahead of time and we'll try to make arrangements so you won't miss out on the fun.

Child II: What's for dinner?

Mother: Spaghetti.

Child II: Oh good. I really like spaghetti. We never get it at dad's place.

Child III: What, no chocolate milk? Dad always has chocolate milk.

Mother: Let's sit down together after dinner and plan the food for the week, but I'm afraid there will be no chocolate milk here. It's too sweet for you.

Child III: Jane has invited me to her pool party tomorrow night but I forgot my swim suit. What can I do?

Mother: Well summer is just beginning. It wouldn't hurt for you to keep a suit over here so you can go swimming this summer. There are suits on sale over at the plaza. We can go over and get you each one. Then we can go to a garage sale on Greenside Road. We'll get a second hand bike for Bob so he can go riding with his friend when he's over here.

Kids: Oh that's neat.

Mother: What time will you be back from Jane's pool party?

Child III: I'll be back at 11:30.

Mother: That sounds good. That talk with you and your dad and

me really helped for us to agree on times for you to be in. Bob, you know I don't like you to watch that violent show. Turn it to another channel.

Child 1: Aw gee, dad lets me watch whatever I want on T.V.

Following the skit the group discusses the benefits of joint custody and the problems involved. "What can children living in this situation tell other children?" "What is helpful?"

HS/ed
16.7.90

ref. joint.cus

APPENDIX F

Please indicate whether your child will be joining the discussion group and whether your child will participate in the evaluation of the program.

I hereby give my consent for my son/daughter to:

(a) -- join the discussion group for single-parents or remarried households

(b) -- participate in the evaluation of the program

Name of Child: _____ **Form:** _____

Date: _____ **Signature of Parent/Guardian** _____

DIVORCE/SEPARATION SUPPORT GROUP SURVEY

Background Information

1. Date: _____

2. Age: __

3. Sex: __ Male __ Female

4. School: _____

5. Grade: __

6. How old were you when your parents separated?
(check one)
a. __ I was still a baby
b. __ I was a few years younger than I am now
c. __ I don't remember how old I was

Please put a checkmark next to the answer that describes your feelings about the divorce/separation group that you participated in.

7. Did you feel that the group was helpful to you?
(check one)
a. __ the group was very helpful
b. __ the group was sort of helpful
c. __ the group was not very helpful
d. __ I don't know

a) Why was the group helpful or not helpful to you? _____

---

8. Did it help you when the group talked about how kids feel about their parents' divorce or separation?
(check one)
a. __ yes, it helped me
b. __ yes, it sort of helped me
c. __ no, it did not help me very much
d. __ I don't know

9. Did your parents fight before their separation?
__ yes
__ no
__ I don't remember

10. Did it help you when the group talked about the fights that parents sometimes have before their divorce or separation?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, it helped me
b. __ yes, it sort of helped me
c. __ no, it did not help me very much
d. __ I don't know

11. Did your parents tell you that they were going to separate?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no
c. __ I don't remember

12. Did it help you when the group talked about how parents tell their kids about their divorce or separation?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, it helped me
b. __ yes, it sort of helped me
c. __ no, it did not help me very much
d. __ I don't know

13. Does your mother or father visit you?
(check only one)
__ yes
__ no

14. Did it help you when the group talked about what happens when parents visit their kids?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, it helped me
b. __ yes, it sort of helped me
c. __ no, it did not help me at all
d. __ I don't know

15. Do you think that other kids could be helped by being in a group like this one?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, I think that other kids could be helped
b. __ maybe other kids could be helped
c. __ no, I don't think other kids could be helped
d. __ I don't know

16. Did you feel comfortable discussing your parents' divorce or separation with the group?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, I felt comfortable
b. __ I felt sort of comfortable
c. __ no, I did not feel comfortable

17. Did the group help you to understand that most kids have the same feelings and worries about divorce and separation?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, it helped me to understand this
b. __ yes, it sort of helped
c. __ no, it did not help me
d. __ I don't know

18. Did you ask any questions about divorce or separation in the group?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

19. Were your questions answered?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ sometimes
c. __ no

20. Did you learn new ways to handle upsetting situations having to do with your parents' divorce or separation?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

21. Did the group help you to feel better about your parents' divorce or separation?
(check only one)
a. __ yes, it helped me
b. __ yes, it sort of helped me
c. __ no, it did not help me
d. __ I don't know

22. Did you discuss the group with your parent(s)?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

If you did discuss the group, what did you talk about? _____

Please feel free to say anything you like about your group.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your help.

CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR AGES 4-16 (For Parents)

For office use onl
ID #

☐ Boy ☐ Girl	AGE	ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE
TODAY'S DATE ____ Date____ Yr.___	CHILD'S BIRTHDATE No.___ Date___ Yr.___	
HOW LONG HAS CHILD BEEN IN THIS SCHOOL	Please fill out this form to reflect your view of the child's behavior even if other people might not agree. Feel free to write additional comments beside each item and in the space provided on page 2.	

PARENTS' USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. (Please be specific--I example, auto mechanic, high school teacher, housewife, laborer, lathe operator, shoe salesman, army sergeant.)

FATHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____

MOTHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____

THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY:

☐ Mother: _____
☐ Father: _____
☐ Other (specify relationship to child): _____

Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in. For example: swimming, baseball, skating, skate boarding, bike riding, fishing, etc.

None

Compared to other children of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?

Compared to other children of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?

	Don't Know	Less Than Average	Average	More Than Average	Don't Know	Below Average	Average	Above Average
a. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please list your child's favorite hobbies, activities, and games, other than sports. For example: stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, singing, etc. (Do not include listening to radio or TV.)

None

Compared to other children of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?

Compared to other children of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?

	Don't Know	Less Than Average	Average	More Than Average	Don't Know	Below Average	Average	Above Average
a. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please list any organizations, clubs, teams, or groups your child belongs to.

None

Compared to other children of the same age, how active is he/she in each?

	Don't Know	Less Active	Average	More Active
a. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please list any jobs or chores your child has. For example: paper route, babysitting, making bed, etc. (Include both paid and unpaid jobs and chores.)

None

Compared to other children of the same age, how well does he/she carry them out?

	Don't Know	Below Average	Average	Above Average
a. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐	☐

1. About how many close friends does your child have? ☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 or 3 ☐ 4 or more
(Do not include brothers & sisters)

2. About how many times a week does your child do things with friends outside of regular school hours?
(Do not include brothers & sisters) ☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1 or 2 ☐ 3 or more

VI. Compared to other children of his/her age, how well does your child:

	Worse	About Average	Better	
a. Get along with his/her brothers & sisters?	☐	☐	☐	☐ Has no brothers or sisters
b. Get along with other children?	☐	☐	☐	
c. Behave with his/her parents?	☐	☐	☐	
d. Play and work by himself/herself?	☐	☐	☐	

VII. 1. For ages 6 and older – performance in academic subjects: (If child is not being taught, please give reason)

	Failing	Below average	Average	Above average
a. Reading, English, or Language Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. History or Social Studies	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Arithmetic or Math	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Science	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other academic subjects – for example: computer courses, foreign language, business. Do not include gym, shop, driver's ed., etc. e. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Is your child in a special class or special school? ☐ No ☐ Yes – what kind of class or school?

3. Has your child repeated a grade? ☐ No ☐ Yes – grade and reason

4. Has your child had any academic or other problems in school? ☐ No ☐ Yes – please describe

When did these problems start?

Have these problems ended? ☐ No ☐ Yes – when?

Does your child have any illness, physical disability, or mental handicap? ☐ No ☐ Yes – please describe

What concerns you most about your child?

Please describe the best things about your child:

APPENDIX B (Part II)

Below is a list of items that describe children. For each item that describes your child now or within the past 6 months, please circle the 2 if the item is very true or often true of your child. Circle the 1 if the item is somewhat or sometimes true of your child. If the item is not true of your child, circle the 0. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to this child.

0 = Not True (as far as you know) 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2 1. Acts too young for his/her age
0 1 2 2. Allergy (describe): _____
_____
0 1 2 3. Argues a lot
0 1 2 4. Asthma
0 1 2 5. Bragging, boasting
0 1 2 6. Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long
0 1 2 7. Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts; (describe):_____
_____
0 1 2 8. Can't sit still restless, or hyperactive
0 1 2 9. Clings to adults or too dependent
0 1 2 10. Complains of loneliness
0 1 2 11. Confused or seems to be in a fog
0 1 2 12. Cries a lot
0 1 2 13. Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others
0 1 2 14. Daydreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts
0 1 2 15. Demands a lot of attention
0 1 2 16. Damages his/her own things
0 1 2 17. Damages things belonging to his/her family or other children
0 1 2 18. Disobedient at home
0 1 2 19. Disobedient at school
0 1 2 20. Doesn't eat well
0 1 2 21. Doesn't get along with other children
0 1 2 22. Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving
0 1 2 23. Easily jealous
0 1 2 24. Fears going to school
0 1 2 25. Fears he/she might think or do something bad
0 1 2 26. Feels he/she has to be perfect
0 1 2 27. Feels or complains that no one loves him/her
0 1 2 28. Feels others are out to get him/her
0 1 2 29. Feels worthless or inferior
0 1 2 30. Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone
0 1 2 31. Gets in many fights
0 1 2 32. Gets teased a lot
0 1 2 33. Hangs around with others who get in trouble
0 1 2 34. Impulsive or acts without thinking
0 1 2 35. Likes to be alone
0 1 2 36. Lying or cheating
0 1 2 37. Bites fingernails
0 1 2 38. Nervous, high-strung, or tense
0 1 2 39. Nervous movements
0 1 2 40. Nightmares
0 1 2 41. Not liked by other children
0 1 2 42. Too fearful or anxious
0 1 2 43. Feels too guilty
0 1 2 44. Overeating
0 1 2 45. Overtired
0 1 2 46. Overweight
0 1 2 47. Underweight
0 1 2 48. Poor school work
0 1 2 49. Poorly coordinated or clumsy
0 1 2 50. Prefers playing with older children
0 1 2 51. Prefers playing with younger children
0 1 2 52. Refuses to talk
0 1 2 53. Repeats certain acts over and over; (describe): _____
_____

0=Not True (as far as you know) 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2=Very True or Often True

0 1 2 54. Runs away from home
0 1 2 55. Screams a lot

0 1 2 56. Secretive, keeps things to self
0 1 2 57. Self-conscious or easily embarrassed

0 1 2 58. Showing off or clowning
0 1 2 59. Shy or timid

0 1 2 60. Sleeps less than most children
0 1 2 61. Sleeps more than most children during day and/or night (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 62. Speech problem (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 63. Stares blankly

0 1 2 64. Steals at home
0 1 2 65. Steals outside the home

0 1 2 66. Stores up things he/she doesn't need (describe): _____

0 1 2 67. Strange behavior (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 68. Strange ideas (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 69. Stubborn, sullen, or irritable

0 1 2 70. Sudden changes in mood or feelings
0 1 2 71. Sulks a lot

0 1 2 72. Suspicious
0 1 2 73. Swearing or obscene language

0 1 2 74. Talks about killing self
0 1 2 75. Talks or walks in sleep (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 76. Talks too much
0 1 2 77. Teases a lot

0 1 2 78. Temper tantrums or hot temper
0 1 2 79. Threatens people

0 1 2 80. Too concerned with neatness or cleanliness
0 1 2 81. Trouble sleeping (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 82. Truancy, skips school
0 1 2 83. Underactive, slow moving, or lacks energy

0 1 2 84. Unhappy, sad, or depressed
0 1 2 85. Unusually loud

0 1 2 86. Uses alcohol or drugs for nonmedical purposes (describe): _____

0 1 2 87. Vandalism
0 1 2 88. Whining

0 1 2 89. Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others
0 1 2 90. Worrying

0 1 2 91. Please write in any problems your child has that were not listed above:

0 1 2 _____

0 1 2 _____

0 1 2 _____

0 1 2 _____

DIVORCE/SEPARATION SUPPORT GROUP SURVEY
(Parents' Version)

Support Groups for Children

1. Do you feel that the support group was helpful to your child?
(check only one)
a. __ the group was very helpful
b. __ the group was somewhat helpful
c. __ the group was not very helpful
d. __ I don't know

a) Why was the group helpful or not helpful to your child?

---

2. Do you think that other children could be helped by being in a support group like this one?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ maybe
c. __ no
d. __ I don't know

3. Did your child ever talk to you about the support group?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

a) If yes, what did he/she talk about? _____

Parent Meetings

4. Did you find the meetings for parents helpful?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

a) If yes, how were they helpful? _____

---

5. Did you have any expectations about the meetings for parents before coming?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ no

a) If yes, what were your expectations? _____

_____

_____

6. Were your expectations met?
(check only one)
a. __ yes
b. __ partially
c. __ no

7. What would you like to have gotten from the meetings that you did not get?

_____

_____

_____

8. Do you think that the school should be involved in providing support groups for children whose parents have separated?
a. __ yes
b. __ no

9. What was the date of your separation from your child's other parent (please think of the child that participated in a divorce/separation group)? _____ __ 19__ (If there was more than one separation, please indicate the first one.)

10. Were there any other separations that occurred after the one mentioned above?
a. yes
b. no

11. Please feel free to make any comments that you would like about the support group that your child was involved in.

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Thank you

APPENDIX J

TEACHER'S REPORT FORM

For office u
ID #

Your answers will be used to compare the pupil with other pupils whose teachers have completed similar forms. The information from t will also be used for comparison with other information. Please answer as well as you can, even if you lack full information. Scores individual items will be combined to identify general patterns of behavior. Fee free to write additional comments beside each item a the space on page 2.

PUPIL'S SEX ☐ Boy ☐ Girl	PUPIL'S AGE	ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE
TODAY'S DATE Mo.____ Date____ Yr.____	PUPIL'S BIRTHDATE (if known) Mo.____ Date____ Yr.____	
GRADE IN SCHOOL	NAME OF SCHOOL	

PARENTS' USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. (Please be as spe as you can--for example, auto mechanic, high school teacher, housewife, laborer, lathe operator, shoe salesman, army sergeant.)

FATHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____

MOTHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____

THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY:

☐ Teacher (name): _____
☐ Counselor (name): _____
☐ Other (specify) name: _____

I. How long have you known this pupil? _____ months

II. How well do you know him/her? 1. ☐ Not Well 2. ☐ Moderately Well 3. ☐ Very Well

III. How much time does he/she spend in your class per week?

IV. What kind of class is it? (Please be specific, e.g., regular 5th grade, 7th grade math, etc.)

V. Has he/she ever been referred for special class placement, services, or tutoring?

Don't Know 0. ☐ No. 1. ☐ Yes-what kind and when?

VI. Has he/she ever repeated a grade?

Don't Know 0. ☐ No. 1. ☐ Yes-grade and reason

VII. Current school performance--list academic subjects and check appropriate colum:

Academic Subject	1. Far below grade	2. Somewhat below grade	3. At grade level	4. Somewhat above grade	5. Far above grade
1._____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2._____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3._____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4._____	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Use	Compared to typical pupils of the same age:	1. Much less	2 Somewhat less	3 Slightly less	4 About average	5 Slightly more	6 Somewhat more	7. Much more
1.	How hard is he/she working?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	How appropriately is he/she behaving?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	How much is he/she learning?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	How happy is he/she?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

IX. Most recent achievement test scores (if available)

Name of test	Subject	Date	Percentile or grade level obtained

X. IQ, readiness, or aptitude tests (if available)

Name of test	Date	IQ or equivalent scores

Does this pupil have any illness, physical disability, or mental handicap? ☐ No ☐ Yes – please describe

What concerns you most about this pupil?

Please describe the best things about this pupil:

Please feel free to write any comments about this pupil's work, behavior, or potential, using extra pages if necessary.

Below is a list of items that describe pupils. For each item that describes the pupil now or within the past 2 months, please circle the 2 if the item is very true or often true of the pupil. Circle the 1 if the item is somewhat or sometimes true of the pupil. If the item is not true of the pupil, circle the 0. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to this pupil.

0 = Not True (as far as you know) 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2 1. Acts too young for his/her age
0 1 2 2. Hums or makes other odd noises in class

0 1 2 3. Argues a lot
0 1 2 4. Fails to finish things he/she starts

0 1 2 5. Defiant, talks back to staff
0 1 2 6. Bragging, boasting

0 1 2 7. Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long
0 1 2 8. Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts; (describe):_____

0 1 2 9. Can't sit still restless, or hyperactive

0 1 2 10. Clings to adults or too dependent

0 1 2 11. Complains of loneliness

0 1 2 12. Confused or seems to be in a fog
0 1 2 13. Cries a lot

0 1 2 14. Fidgets
0 1 2 15. Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others

0 1 2 16. Daydreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts
0 1 2 17. Demands a lot of attention

0 1 2 18. Damages his/her own things
0 1 2 19. Damages property belonging to others

0 1 2 20. Difficulty following directions
0 1 2 21. Disobedient at school

0 1 2 22. Disturbs other pupils
0 1 2 23. Doesn't get along with other pupils

0 1 2 24. Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving
0 1 2 25. Easily jealous

0 1 2 26. Fears going to school
0 1 2 27. Fears he/she might think or do something bad

0 1 2 28. Feels he/she has to be perfect
0 1 2 29. Feels or complains that no one loves him/her

0 1 2 30. Feels others are out to get him/her
0 1 2 31. Feels worthless or inferior

0 1 2 32. Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone
0 1 2 33. Gets in many fights

0 1 2 34. Gets teased a lot
0 1 2 35. Hangs around with others who get in trouble

0 1 2 36. Impulsive or acts without thinking
0 1 2 37. Likes to be alone

0 1 2 38. Lying or cheating
0 1 2 39. Bites fingernails

0 1 2 40. Nervous, high-strung, or tense
0 1 2 41. Nervous movements

0 1 2 42. Overconforms to rules
0 1 2 43. Not liked by other pupils

0 1 2 44. Has difficulty learning
0 1 2 45. Too fearful or anxious

0 1 2 46. Feels too guilty
0 1 2 47. Talks out of turn

0 1 2 48. Overtired
0 1 2 49. Overweight

0 1 2 50. Underweight
0 1 2 51. Sleeps in class

0 1 2 52. Apathetic or unmotivated
0 1 2 53. Poor school work

0 1 2 54. Poorly coordinated or clumsy
0 1 2 55. Prefers being with older children

0 1 2 56. Prefers being with younger children
0 1 2 57. Refuses to talk

0 1 2 58. Repeats certain acts over and over (describe): _____

0=Not True (as far as you know) 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2=Very True or Often True

0 1 2 59. Disrupts class discipline
0 1 2 60. Screams a lot

0 1 2 61. Secretive, keeps things to self
0 1 2 62. Self-conscious or easily embarrassed

0 1 2 63. Messy work
0 1 2 64. Behaves irresponsibly (describe):_____
_____

0 1 2 65. Showing off or clowning
0 1 2 66. Shy or timid

0 1 2 67. Explosive and unpredictable behaviour
0 1 2 68. Demands must be met immediately, easily frustrated

0 1 2 69. Inattentive, easily distracted
0 1 2 70. Speech problem (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 71. Stares blankly
0 1 2 72. Feels hurt when criticized

0 1 2 73. Steals
0 1 2 74. Stores up things he/she doesn't need (describe):
_____
_____

0 1 2 75. Strange behavior (describe):_____
_____

0 1 2 76. Strange ideas (describe): _____
_____

0 1 2 77. Stubborn, sullen, or irritable
0 1 2 78. Sudden changes in mood or feelings

0 1 2 79. Sulks a lot
0 1 2 80. Suspicious

0 1 2 81. Swearing or obscene language
0 1 2 82. Talks about killing self

0 1 2 83. Underachieving, not working up to potential
0 1 2 84. Talks too much

0 1 2 85. Teases a lot
0 1 2 86. Temper tantrums or hot temper

0 1 2 87. Threatens people
0 1 2 88. Tardy to school or class

0 1 2 89. Too concerned with neatness or cleanliness
0 1 2 90. Fails to carry out assigned tasks

0 1 2 91. Truancy or unexplained absence
0 1 2 92. Underactive, slow moving, or lacks energy

0 1 2 93. Unhappy, sad, or depressed
0 1 2 94. Unusually loud

0 1 2 95. Uses alcohol or drugs for nonmedical purposes (describe): _____

0 1 2 96. Overly anxious to please
0 1 2 97. Dislikes school

0 1 2 98. Is afraid of making mistakes
0 1 2 99. Whining

0 1 2 100. Unclean personal appearance
0 1 2 101. Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others

0 1 2 102. Worrying
0 1 2 103. Please write in any problems the pupil has that were not not listed above:

0 1 2 _____

0 1 2 _____

0 1 2 _____

APPENDIX K

Examples of anecdotal information based on group leaders' observations

Case One:

One child felt "caught in between her mother and father". She was unhappy that her relationship with her brother was deteriorating. Her brother was unable to deal with the divorce and engaged in acting out behaviour. The child was told by the group leaders that sometimes children act out when their parents get divorced and that she should not think that her brother is angry with her. Group leaders also suggested that she might want to speak to her brother and tell him that she feels unhappy that they no longer have a good relationship. It was also suggested that she tell her brother that it is not a good idea to keep feelings bottled up inside. The girl's parents remarked that prior to the group, their daughter would not talk about the divorce, but that now she would discuss it. Her parents were relieved that their daughter was 'opening up' to them.

Case 2

One child was feeling a good deal of anger toward his stepfather who had suddenly left his mother after seven years of marriage. The stepfather left the family very abruptly and did not explain his departure. During the first few group sessions, this child did not express any of his anger toward his stepfather. However, after three or four group sessions, he was able to share his angry feelings with the group. For the first time, he was able to discuss problems with his stepfather with other children.